

## First-year activities

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collection of resource data for a Hispanic cancer database. The purpose of this Cancer Control Partners Directory, which is currently under development, is to provide an electronic regional source of information on Hispanic cancer research, training and awareness activities. More specifically, the directory will provide regional contact information in numerous areas, including cancer research and training opportunities, cancer awareness activities, and specifics on investigators conducting cancer control studies and their funding sources.

With regard to first-year *Redes* activities directly related to the program's core initiatives (research, training and awareness), progress has been made in the following areas:

### Research

**Key observer survey.** As part of the process of determining priority areas involving Hispanics and cancer, 1,200 selected opinion leaders around the country are currently being surveyed. Survey participants span a variety of disciplines, including cancer specialists, hospital administrators, insurance providers, patients, research scientists, and representatives of governmental and service organizations. The expected outcome of the survey will be determination of at least eight priority issues, which then will be the focus of efforts to initiate new research through NCI-funded pilot projects and, subsequently, full competing grants.

**Pilot projects.** *Redes En Acción* also functions as a venue for funding pilot projects focusing on Hispanic cancer issues. The first set of grant applications have been forwarded to NCI from various regions of the country. The RFA (Request for Application) will be issued twice a year, with deadlines of April 1 and December 1, during Years 2-4 of the program. In addition to relevance to priority topics and to the Hispanic population, criteria for NCI-funded projects include originality, feasibility, scientific merit and likelihood that the project can be developed into a larger investigation. A goal is to develop pilot projects into full, competing grant applications for NIH or other external funding.

### Training

**Professional education.** The education component of *Redes En Acción* promotes cancer-related training activities in Years 2-5 for 1) pre- and post-doctoral individuals, 2) junior faculty and 3) student summer interns. Review and selection procedures for trainees have been developed to complete the training goals. For more information see "Trainee positions announced" on page 6.

### Awareness (public education)



First-year media coverage included the *Redes* National Steering Committee meeting.

**Newsletter.** Since last August, about 38,000 copies of the *Redes Report*, a 6-page *Redes* program publication have been distributed. Produced quarterly, the newsletter disseminates relevant and helpful information about cancer issues and "role models" engaged in research and professional and public education related to those issues. The newsletter also keeps *Redes* partners – and potential partners – informed of program activities.

**Community / Professional Events.** During the past year, Regional Network Center staffs around the country raised awareness of the program and its objectives, particularly in the area of Hispanic cancer education, in a variety of regional and local community events. These events included health fairs, children's anti-smoking campaigns, breast cancer awareness efforts, and participation at neighborhood health centers and school events. In addition, *Redes* made more than 30 presentations promoting the program at national, regional and area conferences and meetings.

**Web site.** The *Redes En Acción* web site, currently in the design phase, is expected to be completed and available on the Internet soon. The site will incorporate several components and serve multiple purposes, offering features that promote interaction and support among the regional centers, researchers, students, community-based organizations, and members of the media and public.



## Redes partners with CIS

For a wide range of cancer research, training and awareness activities, *Redes En Acción* is joining forces with the Cancer Information Service (CIS) in the following areas:

- ▶ **Partnership development:** Helping identify and recruit appropriate partner organizations and individuals to join the *Redes* network.
- ▶ **Network promotion:** Assisting in developing content for the *Redes* newsletter and in its distribution, and promoting activities through presentations.
- ▶ **Media campaign support:** Helping develop and disseminate *Redes*' national Hispanic cancer awareness PSAs.
- ▶ **CIS-based research:** Using the CIS 1-800 number in the PSAs and subsequent monitoring, analysis and reporting of calls generated by the media campaign.
- ▶ **Survey support:** Helping identify participants in the *Redes* key observer survey, as well as monitoring responses/follow-ups.
- ▶ **Pilot project promotion:** Promoting the *Redes* pilot project RFAs and possible collaboration in specified research projects.

## Honors & Appointments

**Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez** received the academic Hispanic Health Leadership Award at the National Hispanic Medical Association's Fifth Annual Conference in March. Dr. Ramirez, Associate Professor of Medicine and Deputy Director of the Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Research Center, Baylor College of Medicine, is Principal Investigator of *Redes En Acción*.

**Dr. Estevan T. Flores** has been appointed to the Health and Human Services Secretary's new Advisory Committee on Minority Health. Dr. Flores is a sociologist and journalist, Latino/a Research and Policy Center, and member of the *Redes En Acción* National Steering Committee.

## Trainee positions announced

To further the *Redes En Acción* goals of recruiting and training young Hispanic cancer researchers and professionals, opportunities exist for student summer interns, pre- and post-doctoral individuals, and junior faculty.

**Student Summer Intern.** To provide undergraduate and recent Hispanic college graduates with experience in cancer research, each of the six *Redes* Regional Network Centers (RNC) will recruit an intern this summer for a 10-week period. The RNCs will provide financial support, mentoring and guidance in preparation for application for post-graduate education in medicine and/or public health.

**Pre- and Post-Doctoral Trainees.** The goal is to pair pre- and post-doctoral individuals of Hispanic heritage with ongoing research projects targeting cancer in Hispanic populations. Trainees are expected to secure their own funding through an individual grant or ongoing research project. The *Redes* program offers assistance in linking potential trainees with projects through its regional Cancer Control Partners Directory database.

**Junior Faculty.** Through NCI-funded pilot projects, *Redes En Acción* is providing Hispanic junior faculty with opportunities for supported 10-week mini-sabbatical cancer research in Hispanic populations. To be eligible, the faculty member should have completed doctoral training within the previous four years. The research must be conducted in conjunction with a pilot project, either by utilizing data from the project, helping develop the project, or serving as a project investigator. Junior faculty will be evaluated on quality and completion of their projects, and on the potential for developing pilot projects into full, competing grant applications.

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**National Network Center**  
**Principal Investigator**  
 Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH  
 Baylor College of Medicine  
 8207 Callaghan Rd. Ste. 110  
 San Antonio, Texas 78230  
 Phone: 210.348-0255  
 Fax: 210-348-0554  
 E-mail: aramirez@bcm.tmc.edu

**Regional Network Centers**  
**Northeast RNC**  
 Jose R. Marti, MD  
 Co-Principal Investigator  
 The Brooklyn Hospital Center  
 Brooklyn, NY

**Southeast RNC**  
 Edward J. Trapido, ScD  
 Co-Principal Investigator  
 Sylvester Comprehensive  
 Cancer Center  
 University of Miami, Florida

**North Central RNC**  
 Aida L. Giachello, PhD  
 Co-Principal Investigator  
 Midwest Latino Health  
 Research Center  
 University of Illinois at Chicago  
 Chicago, Illinois

**South Central RNC**  
 Martha A. Medrano, MD, MPH  
 Co-Principal Investigator  
 Medical Hispanic Center  
 of Excellence  
 University of Texas Health  
 Science Center at San Antonio  
 San Antonio, Texas

**Northwest RNC**  
 Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable, MD  
 Co-Principal Investigator  
 University of California,  
 San Francisco  
 San Francisco, California

**Southwest RNC**  
 Gregory A. Talavera, MD, MPH  
 Co-Principal Investigator  
 Graduate School of Public Health  
 San Diego State University  
 San Diego, California

**National Hispanic Medical Association**  
 Elena Rios, MD, MSPH  
 Washington, DC

**Program Consultants**  
 Alfred L. McAlister, PhD  
 Lucina Suarez, PhD



## Redes activities reflect progress as Year 1 ends, Year 2 begins

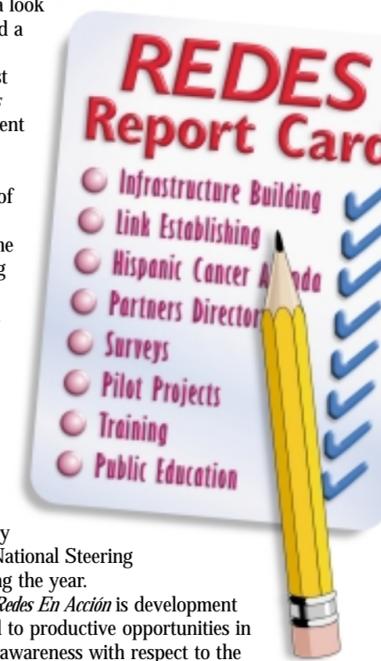
After a productive first year of the 5-year *Redes En Acción*. Cancer Awareness, Research and Training program, activities now are paving the way for the next phase of the program and plans for achieving Year 2 objectives. The close of Year 1 offers an excellent opportunity for a *Redes* progress report – a look back at activities and accomplishments and a look ahead to plans for the coming year.

**Infrastructure building.** During the first year, the organizational structure for *Redes* took shape, beginning with the establishment of the National Network Center (NNC), coordinated by the Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Research Center of the Baylor College of Medicine. Last August, the NNC organized and hosted the inaugural meeting of the National Steering Committee, a 33-member body comprised of leaders from academia, federal agencies and representatives of community-based organizations with a combined membership of almost 100,000.

Year 1 also saw development of six Regional Network Centers (RNCs) across the country – in San Francisco, San Diego, Chicago, San Antonio, New York City and Miami. Each of the RNCs organized a Regional Community Advisory Committee similar in composition to the National Steering Committee, and conducted meetings during the year.

**Establishing links.** A principal goal of *Redes En Acción* is development of collaborative relationships that will lead to productive opportunities in the areas of cancer research, training and awareness with respect to the Hispanic population. For example, a partnership was formed with the National Hispanic Medical Association in Washington, DC. Similarly, to help support *Redes* public communication, research and training goals, *Redes En Acción* has developed formal

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### Inside



Birthdays are typically a good time to step back, take a deep breath and see how far you've come. *Redes En Acción* has reached a milestone – we're a year old now –

and such an assessment seems as appropriate for programs as it does for individuals. Perhaps even more so because the mission and activities of *Redes En Acción* in cancer research, training and public education for Hispanics is so important.

So in this issue, as we continue to move forward, we take a look back at our progress to date. Some of the activities we discuss, such as development of our new web site and the nationwide surveys of key opinion leaders, are in the initial implementation phases as we speak – and we'll have more news on those in the summer and fall issues.

One of the major components of the *Redes* program, promoting professional training for young Hispanic cancer researchers and health care professionals, will be initiated in Year 2 and continue throughout the course of the program. For information on plans to identify and recruit interns, pre- and post-doctoral trainees, and junior faculty, see the story in this issue.

Elsewhere on our pages, we visit some outstanding "role models." These are individuals who are working in fields that impact Hispanics who 1) have cancer, 2) are at risk for the disease or 3) have a family member who has been diagnosed. As usual, their stories are both unique and fascinating.

Finally, we're laying plans for our second *Redes En Acción* National Steering Committee meeting, scheduled August 15-17 in San Antonio. We look forward to bringing you more news on our preparations in the summer newsletter and a synopsis of the meeting in the fall issue.

**Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH**  
 Principal Investigator  
*Redes En Acción*

### National Steering Committee meeting scheduled for August

Dates have been set for the second annual *Redes En Acción* National Steering Committee meeting. The committee will meet August 15-17 at the Plaza San Antonio Hotel in downtown San Antonio. For further information about the meeting, see the summer issue of the *Redes Report*.

The *Redes Report* is produced quarterly by *Redes En Acción*: Cancer Awareness, Research and Training, NCI Grant No. UO 1 CA 86117-01



# TRAINING

## Community-based Education

**Nereida Borrero, RN, MSN, GNP**  
*Brooklyn, New York*

Nereida Borrero believes greater attention is needed for caretakers of cancer patients. As a Geriatric Nurse Practitioner in Brooklyn, she is devoting much of her time and energy to that effort.

Nereida has been working with the Family Caregiving Initiative, training and counseling caregivers of neurologically impaired individuals during acute and chronic phases of illness. She is completing that project and is now engaging in a similar educational and support program for family caregivers of cancer patients.

"Hospitalization time is now short and illness may be prolonged, so much of the patient care takes place in the home," she notes. "The caretakers are primarily family members with

little knowledge or experience. Although resources may be available, families are often unaware of their existence. This program helps solve this problem."

While a goal is to reduce caregiver burden by providing information and education about the disease process and the tasks ahead, the program also helps provide emotional support and assistance in working with the healthcare system. Nereida serves as a Clinical Coordinator to link caregivers to programs and other resources in the community.

"We need to decrease feelings of loneliness and isolation in family members," she says.

"Many have experienced job changes and role modifications after a loved one's illness. Often they are unable to reach out to change their situation."

Nereida, who was born in Puerto Rico, holds a master's degree in nursing with concentration in geriatrics and has more than 12 years experience in Community Health Nursing. She has

always enjoyed working with patients and their families in their homes.

All of this experience has helped Nereida in her current role as Project Coordinator for *Redes En Acci3n*.



**"Hospitalization time is now short and illness may be prolonged, so much of the patient care takes place in the home."**



# RESEARCH

## The Role of Spirituality

**Dr. Carlos Sandoval-Cros**  
*Miami, Florida*

In his work with patients over the years, Dr. Carlos Sandoval-Cros has found that, in a general sense, the Hispanic culture offers some advantages in confronting cancer.

"Non-spiritual patients do not cope as well as patients with a spiritual foundation," he says. "Since the majority of Hispanics are religious, they seem to cope better."

Dr. Sandoval-Cros, psychiatrist and Director of the Courtelis Center for Research and Treatment of Psychosocial Oncology at the University of Miami / Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, is uniquely qualified to examine and discuss the role of spirituality in the scope of cancer prevention and control. In addition to his medical background, he is an ordained Episcopalian priest.

Not surprisingly, his experience as a doctor and priest has cultivated a strong interest in learning more about the mental and spiritual mechanisms employed by Hispanics in dealing with disease. He has found that "Hispanic patients with serious health issues more frequently consult their families first. They seek the

Church second. And when all else fails, they seek a professional medical doctor."

Dr. Sandoval-Cros earned his medical degree from the Catholic University Mater et Magistra in the Dominican Republic. After graduating from medical school, he became a seminarian. As a medical missionary, he traveled to Quito, Ecuador, where he was ordained a priest.

He returned to Miami and completed his psychiatry residency at UM/Jackson Memorial Hospital, where he took a position as a psychiatrist. He was named Director of the Courtelis Center in 1998. The Courtelis Center is an expansion of UM/Sylvester's Psychosocial Oncology Program, which offers a full-service, state-of-the-art healing center, meeting the special emotional and support needs of cancer patients and their families.

In 1995, Dr. Sandoval-Cros became Rector of Saint Simon's Episcopal Church, a bicultural congregation in Southwest Miami. His religious training enhances and complements his work as a mental health professional in the field of oncology.

With regard to future investigative avenues in Hispanic cancer issues, Dr. Sandoval-Cros points to the field of preventive medicine. "The culture does not have a conscious element of preventive medicine. I support any endeavors to educate and promote awareness for preventive medicine. Also, I would like to research and explore the psychosocial and beneficial effects of specialized support group studies on Hispanics dealing with cancer."



# AWARENESS

## Changing Attitudes

**Dr. Jose F. Trabal**  
*San Antonio, Texas*

Thanks to a host of barriers revolving around attitudes toward clinical trials, recruiting Mexican American women for cancer studies has been a major challenge for Dr. Jose F. Trabal, Clinical Associate Professor of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.

Since a major asset in implementing cervical cancer clinical trials in San Antonio and South Texas was believed to be the predominantly Mexican American population, investigators assumed that recruiting Hispanic women would be easy. However, the reality has been quite different.

As one of the study's regional Principal Investigators, Dr. Trabal has faced an uphill battle. He noted that common barriers raised by study participants and their families include:

- ▶ "This will be an experiment on my body."
- ▶ "We should not be part of this if any friends or relatives are involved."

- ▶ "This is just another way that the government will take control of us."
- ▶ "Nothing good will come out of this."
- ▶ "Participating in a clinical trial is expensive."
- ▶ "Time for my family will be reduced or lost."

"We suffer from lack of awareness programs targeting this population, in particular, about the advantages of enrollment into clinical cancer trials from the patient perspective, but also from other health care providers in the area that are not involved in this type of research," says Dr. Trabal.

He emphasizes that these factors not only harm research efforts, but are preventing Hispanics from realizing potential benefits of clinical trials such as the cervical cancer study. To reduce or remove these obstacles, Dr. Trabal supports a two-pronged approach:

- ▶ Increasing efforts to develop cervical cancer awareness programs informing Hispanic women about the benefits of participating in clinical trials and other studies. We should remember that, ultimately, the patient's decision may determine her health outcome.
- ▶ Encouraging primary care providers serving Hispanic populations to participate in clinical trial recruitment. Primary care physicians should send a clear message that participation in research is important for their patients and other potential Hispanic cancer patients.



# FROM THE SURGEON GENERAL

## New Female Smoking Data

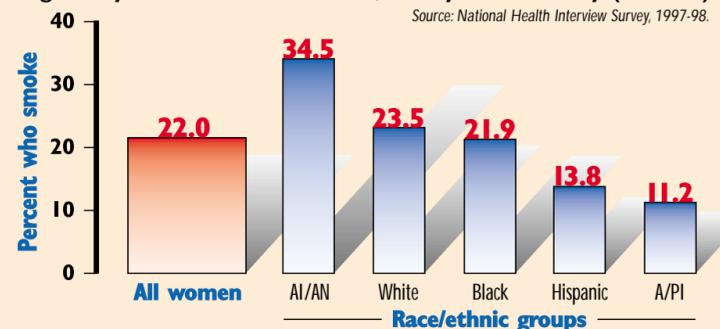
Women now account for 39 percent of all smoking-related deaths each year in the United States, a proportion that has more than doubled since 1965, according to a new report on women and smoking released by Surgeon General David Satcher. The report, "Women and Smoking: A Report of the Surgeon General," summarizes patterns of tobacco use among women, factors associated with starting and continuing to smoke, the health consequences of smoking, tobacco marketing targeted as women, and cessation and prevention interventions.

The full report, executive summary and other related information are available on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Office on Smoking and Health web site: [www.cdc.gov/tobacco](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco). Also, copies of the report, executive summary, "At-A-Glance," and numerous fact sheets can be ordered via fax by calling

### Prevalence of Current Smoking Among U.S. Women

**Ages 18 years or older: All women, and by race/ethnicity (1997-98)**

Source: National Health Interview Survey, 1997-98.



1-800-CDC-1311 or writing the CDC's Office on Smoking and Health, Mailstop K-50, 4770 Buford Highway, Atlanta, Georgia 30341.

# NEWS FROM NHMA

The National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA) is coordinating the Hispanic Health Coalition Input for the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) new legislation that will be re-introduced in March to the 107th Congress. "The Hispanic Health Act" HR5595 calls for funding of diabetes, HIV/AIDS and mental health, based on the CHC hearings of September 1999 and will create a new entity, the Hispanic-serving health professions schools. According to the legislation, requirements for such schools under Section 799B of the Public Health Service Act are as follows:

- ▶ Have at least 5 percent Hispanic student enrollment
- ▶ Have been effective in carrying out programs to recruit Hispanic individuals to enroll in and graduate from the school
- ▶ Have been effective in recruiting and retaining Hispanic faculty members
- ▶ Have a significant number of graduates who are providing health services to medically underserved populations

This is the first-ever Congressional Hispanic Caucus bill on health for Hispanics, and NHMA is requesting your support. To find out how you can help, contact Dr. Elena Rios, NHMA President, at [nhma@earthlink.net](mailto:nhma@earthlink.net) no later than May 10.

## On the 'front line'

**Dr. Miguel A. Villalona Calero**  
*Columbus, Ohio*



Dr. Miguel A. Villalona Calero, who has spent most of his medical career focusing on cancer research, sees progress in the battle against this killer disease.

"Being in the 'front line' on cancer research has made me realize that revolutionary treatments are around the corner," he notes. "But these treatments are likely to be costly and unreachable for people without health insurance, a category in which Hispanics are over-represented."

Dr. Villalona Calero's training in clinical and translational science has allowed him to make important contributions in the field. To ensure that his work and that of his colleagues are beneficial to all, he says, "the next step after a cure or prevention for cancer is accomplished will be to devise policies that will make these treatments available to all people regardless of their social status or background."

A native of the Dominican Republic, Dr. Villalona Calero attended medical school in his home country and then came to the United States to continue his studies and research. Currently, he is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Medicine, Ohio State University. He is also a Medical Oncologist and Physician Scientist at The Arthur James Cancer Hospital and Richard Solove Research Institute, Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Dr. Villalona Calero's recent work includes caring for patients with thoracic malignancies; teaching fellows, residents and medical students in the care of solid tumor patients; and performing both clinical and basic science research with a focus on cancer. His research interests are to find novel ways to treat patients with lung and esophageal cancer.

Dr. Villalona Calero has recently been appointed to the National Hispanic Medical Association's Leadership Fellowship Program. In collaboration with the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, this program is a year-long training for 20 mid-career Hispanic physicians to develop leadership skills for policy careers at the federal level.

Acknowledging that he has achieved a substantial measure of success for someone who was born, raised and attended medical school in the Dominican Republic, Dr. Villalona Calero strives for more. "My ultimate accomplishment," he says, "would be to make a difference in the access to cancer care that Hispanic Americans will have in the years to come."

# First-year activities

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collaborations with regional Cancer Information Service (CIS) offices: New York State Region, Coastal Region (Florida, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands), South Central Region (Texas, Oklahoma) and California State Region.

Collaborative agreements have been reached with other national and regional organizations in the past year. In one project, the Latino Council on Alcohol and Tobacco (LCAT) is teaming with *Redes En Acci3n* to create a national network of experts, researchers and community-based organizations working on tobacco prevention and control.

Other potentially productive partnerships are in the formative stage. For example, *Redes En Acci3n* and the Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Research Center recently organized an exploratory meeting of representatives from the five NCI Special Populations Networks (SPNs) and the Cancer Genetics Networks (GGN). The purpose of the workshop was to begin the process of establishing a collaborative partnership between the SPNs and the CGNs to develop mutually beneficial research and training opportunities. Also, *Redes En Acci3n* is exploring plans to partner with the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation in developing an investigation of breast cancer genetics issues that may be relevant to screening, treatment and diagnosis.

**Hispanic cancer agenda.** To lay the foundation for activities this year and in the future, the *Redes* program is working to identify and prioritize cancer issues of greatest relevance and concern to Hispanics. The first step was to solicit recommendations from National Steering Committee members, who discussed and debated the issues during their initial meeting last summer in San Antonio. Regional insight came during similar discussions in ensuing Regional Community Advisory Committee meetings. Finally, input will be received from national surveys of key observers and Hispanic physicians this spring. The goal is to use information gained throughout this process in developing a national Hispanic cancer agenda, which will help drive future research, professional training and public education efforts.

**Partners directory.** An early, ongoing task of the regional *Redes* sites has been the

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